

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 10, 2023

The Honorable Alexander Schallenberg
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Austria
Minoritenplatz 8, 1010
Vienna, Austria

Dear Minister Schallenberg,

We write to respectfully request that your government reconsider its decision to grant visas to members of the Russian delegation to the Winter Meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna later this month.

As you know, the United States and European Union have placed every member of the Russian Duma under sanctions for having explicitly endorsed Vladimir Putin's war of aggression on Ukraine and his claim to have annexed vast swathes of Ukrainian territory. These individuals are complicit in the crimes the Russian military is committing in Ukraine and in the suppression of thousands of anti-war protestors within Russia.

One year into Putin's war, there can be no doubt that Russia's delegates to the OSCE PA intend to use the Winter Meeting as a platform for lies, not dialogue. No one should be under the illusion that their participation will be constructive. On the contrary, these Duma deputies are more likely to seek to undermine the work of the Assembly, scorn the founding principles of the OSCE, and insult the people of Ukraine, who are sacrificing daily to defend their sovereignty and liberty against a continuing Russian onslaught.

The participation of these individuals in the Winter Meeting will be all the more galling as the event will coincide with the one-year anniversary of the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24.

We understand that the Austrian government is not responsible for inviting Russia's delegations to the meeting and that, in granting visas, it is acting in compliance with the headquarters agreement between the Republic of Austria and the OSCE. Nevertheless, we believe the extraordinary circumstances of Russia's invasion demand an extraordinary reaction from all our governments.

We thereby urge you to deny visas for all Russian Duma members for the Winter Meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joe" and last name "Wilson" clearly distinguishable.

Congressman Joe Wilson
Chairman, U.S. Helsinki Commission

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben Cardin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ben" and last name "Cardin" clearly distinguishable.

Senator Ben Cardin
Head of Delegation, United States of America

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Cohen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Cohen" clearly distinguishable.

Congressman Steve Cohen
OSCE PA Special Representative on Political
Prisoners